

Mission Nuestra Señora del Socorro
Socorro, Texas.

HABS No. Tex-3105

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**ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...**

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Texas-S

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic Mission San Juan de los Rios
Berleth Cooke, District Officer
San Antonio, Texas.

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MISSION NUESTRA SENORA DEL SOCORRO
Socorro, El Paso County, Texas.

Present Owner: Catholic Church; Bishop A.J. Schuler, El Paso, Texas.

Date of Erection: Original Mission founded in 1680; present building built in 1840.

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One

Materials of Construction: Adobe, plaster, cottonwood and cypress.

Other Existing Records: Various records of the Catholic Church
Bishop A.J. Schuler, El Paso, Texas.
Father D'Corne, Mission Nuestra Senora
del Socorro, Socorro, Texas.

Additional Data:

The following historical data is mounted and framed and hangs in the apse of the mission:

"Mission of Socorro, Texas. 250 years old. The oldest settlement of southwest.

1. This Mission of Socorro was founded in the fall of 1680 by Piros Indians, refugees of old Socorro, New Mexico and by their father Fr. Antonio Guerra.

2. This place is the oldest permanent settlement of Texas, and of all southwest, the first of California dating from 1769, Nacogdoches from 1716, San Antonio from 1718, Goliad from 1722, those of New Mexico being interrupted from 1680 to 1692, those of Ysleta from 1682, that of San Elceario from 1773.

3. The Population of Socorro in 1750 was 498 Piros Indians and only 54 Spaniards, while Ysleta has 199 Tijuas Indians

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and 127 Spaniards; so Socorro was the most prosperous town of the valley.

4. The permanent church building was probably built after 1692 when Captain Diego de Vargas crossed through Socorro to reconquer New Mexico. This building was unfortunately washed away by a flood about 1830 when the river changed its bed and left the town this side in United States.

5. The present church was rebuilt half a mile west of the old, but with same design and same roof timbers, the work being completed in 1840 and blessed by Fr. Andres de Jesus Camacho, pastor of El Paso, on first of August of 1843.

6. The adobe walls were nine feet wide, so that two men could cross with their loaded wheel barrows carrying over it mud and materials. The size was afterwards reduced for plastering and shrines added on the sides.

7. The Pirus Indians of Socorro were famous hunters and used to go yearly hunting deer and antilopes to Diablo Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains on the Pecos River. The meat was cut in thin strings and dried for all season. But they soon lost their personality of indians and language mixing freely with Spaniards. Presently not a score are known as Trije Indians.

8. When Presidio of San Elceario was built in 1773, Socorro lost its importance as frontier town and first stopping place for merchants coming from south. Both ceased to grow when the river changed its bed and the highway went direct to El Paso. The church was built as a fort and refuge in case of Apaches inroad. A large patio with strong adobe fence would help the defenders. The case was not imaginary. From years 1771-1778 the governor of New Vizcaya listed 1,963 persons killed, 155 taken prisoners, 118 haciendas and ranches destroyed and 68,873 head of cattle stolen by apaches in the province.

The life of old days in Socorro was happy. The irrigation ditch they opened with the Ysletans provided abundantly the crops of corn, wheat, sweet potatoes, chili beans and vegetables. Each family had its herds of cows, horses, goats and sheep grazing freely in the public lands of the hills. The river had plenty of

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fish and game swimming in the swamps. In the holy days fireworks, dances, music and religious ceremonies attracted all the people of the valley. The feasts of La Purisima and San Miguel were bolsterous.

9. Six of the old padres paintings brought from some Mexican convent can still be seen in the rectory.

10. The new church was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, but the Archangel St. Michael was kept as secondary in the side shrine.

11. The statue of St. Michael (which replaces now the old painting of the old padres) has its own history. It is said that, when carried in an ox cart from Mexico to Socorro, New Mexico, the wagon stopped here, and three teams of strong oxen could not haul it farther. They still show the ruins of a little chapel built in the place where it stopped. The people of this place bought the statue, since famous in the little town.

12. In the big cotton trees, which used to be around the church, several members of the armed expedition sent to assert the sovereignty of the Republic of Texas on the valley, were hanged in the year of 1841.

13. The control of the place by the first American soldiers, bringing the flag of U.S. came a few years later, after the battle of Brazitos on Christmas day, 1846.

14. In 1868 Socorro ceased to belong to Mexican Diocese of Durango and became a part of the American Vicariste-Apostolic of Tucson, though the first American priest Fr. Ollivier Ruellen only took possession in June 1873.

15. In the Slat War of San Elizario, 1877, Fr. Bourgade, the Priest of Socorro, took the side of the rangers against Cardini and Fr. Bozrajo, a famous Spanish pastor of the valley who succeeded the last padre in 1851. Fr. Bourgade in May 1885 was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of Arizona and in May, 1897 was first Bishop of Tucson."

This mission with its soft, white exterior walls, remains the outstanding example of Spanish Mission architecture with definite Indian detail and influence. Its "II" plan, its

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heavy, massive adobe walls; its beamed ceiling treatment with colored designs makes this mission one of the most outstanding of the State, and certainly the most charming of the missions in the El Paso area.

Author:

Bartlett Cocke, Dist. Officer

Date: October 30, 1936.

TW 7/26/37

Mision Nuestra Senora Del Socorro
Moon Road at Farm Road 258
Socorro
El Paso County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3105

Addendum to

Mission Nuestra Senora Del Socorro, Church
Moon Road at Farm Road 258
Socorro
El Paso County
Texas
in HABS Texas Catalog (1974)

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

ADDENDUM TO

MISION NUESTRA SENORA DEL SOCORRO

(Mision Nuestra Senora del Socorro, Church)

Moon Rd. at Farm Rd. 258

Socorro

El Paso County

Texas

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